DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 199 206 SP 017 595

AUTHOR McEwin, C. Kenneth
TITLE A Report on Middle Grades Schools in North Carolina. A Study of Current Practices. Monograph 2.
INSTITUTION Appalachian State Univ., Boone, N.C.; North Carolina League of Middle/Junior High Schools.
PUB DATE 81
NOTE 12p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Accreditation (Institutions); *Curriculum; *Educational Facilities; *Junior High Schools; *Middle Schools; *School Organization; School Size; Secondary School Teachers; *State Norms; Teacher Education
IDENTIFIERS *North Carolina

ABSTRACT

This monograph presents information on North Carolina middle grades schools: (1) organizational patterns of middle grades schools from 1968 to 1980; (2) reasons for establishing middle grades schools; (3) number and size of middle grades schools; (4) curriculum opportunities; (5) accreditation of schools and professional training of faculty; (6) middle school facilities; and (7) comparison of practices in middle and junior high schools. A discussion is presented on the nature of middle grades education in the state, and recommendations are made for future policy and practice. (JD)

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MONOGRAPH 2 • 1981

ED199206

A Report On Middle Grades Schools In North Carolina

A Study Of Current Practices

by **C. Kenneth McEwin**

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Appalachian State University
Boone, North Carolina 28608
Cratis D. Williams
Graduate School

August 15, 1980

To the Reader:

Some wise sage has said that the present is the only key to the future. Those of us who are concerned with both the present and the future of middle grades education in North Carolina will be able to gain some idea of what we are now about and what our future might hold from this well-researched monograph. The amount of information in this relatively small monograph is truly amazing. Certainly the planning and direction of each aspect of middle grades education in North Carolina from the state department to the individual teacher's classroom will find something useful in this document.

The last section of the monograph contains not only conclusions but recommendations for improvements of middle grades education which should be seriously considered. If only a small portion of the recommendations are implemented within the next few years, we will realize some significant improvements in the quality of education given to our middle grades students.

To the schools that participated in the study and to Dr. McEwin who authored the monograph, I am proud to congratulate them on a job well done.

Sincerely,

Joyce V. Lawrence, Ed.D.
Chairperson, Research Committee
NC League of Middle/Junior High Schools

Dean of the Graduate School

FORWARD

As increasing numbers of middle grades schools have been established in North Carolina and the nation, there has been a growing interest in the nature of these schools and the instructional programs they provide. There is also a concern that many of these schools may not be based on what is known about the unique characteristics and needs of middle grades learners. There is, however, a renewed interest in improving educational opportunities for this most important age group. Large groups of educators and other interested persons are making significant efforts to establish new programs and improve existing ones. It is the hope of this researcher that the information provided in this study will assist this group of persons in their quest to guarantee quality educational programs for all middle grades students in North Carolina. The researcher would like to thank all the respondents for taking time from their busy schedules to complete this survey.

In order to obtain current information on middle grades schools in North Carolina, a questionnaire was mailed to all middle grades schools in the state. Middle grades schools were defined as "schools serving at least two grades, no more than five grades, and including grade seven." Using this definition 330 schools were identified utilizing the *North Carolina Educational Directory* as a source. The 207 schools responding to the survey closely approximated organizational patterns existing at the time of the survey. This research is sponsored by the North Carolina League of Middle/Junior High Schools and Appalachian State University.

C. Kenneth McEwin

A Report On Middle Grades Schools In North Carolina: *A Study Of Current Practices*

by C. Kenneth McEwin

Sponsored by The North Carolina League of Middle/Junior High Schools and Appalachian State University, Boone, NC 28608

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PART I
ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERNS

Organizational Patterns — 1968 to Present

Organizational patterns have changed significantly in North Carolina in recent years. Table 1 represents the organization of middle grades schools in 1968-69, 1973-74, 1978-79 and 1979-80. The 7-9 junior high school remains the most popular form of organization. Analysis of the data, however, shows that middle grades schools - generally called middle schools - are gaining in popularity at a rapid pace. The number of schools with grade nine declined for the first time in 1979. It is too early, however, to assume this trend will continue in the future.

TABLE 1

ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERNS IN NORTH CAROLINA MIDDLE GRADES SCHOOLS*

Grades	1968-69	1973-74	1978-79	1979-80
3-7	0	1	2	2
4-7	2	9	10	7
4-8	6	19	22	23
5-7	2	5	3	4
5-8	5	26	29	27
5-9	1	6	1	1
6-7	1	10	10	11
6-8	16	26	50	58
6-9	4	6	4	5
7-8	18	45	50	47
7-9	104	124	149	147
Totals	159	277	330	332

*This data based on information from the *North Carolina Education Directory* published by the State Department of Public Instruction.

The data revealed that the number of middle grades schools have more than doubled since 1968. It should be noted, however, that large numbers of K-8 and other organizational pattern schools still are in operation. Careful examination of Table 1 offers additional insights into the evolving organizational patterns. It may be of interest to note that the 4-8, 5-8, 6-8, and 7-8 plans have grown in popularity although the 7-8 pattern declined during the 1979-80 school year. The most popular grade organization was 7-9 (44%), with 6-8 (19%) being the second most popular and 7-8 (14%) ranking third.

Organizational Patterns in 1978-79

The data in Table 2 reflects the organizational patterns of North Carolina middle grades schools as defined in this study. A total of 330 schools were identified and included in the survey. Two hundred seven schools returned the survey and the number and percent of these responses are represented in Table 2. The number and percent of the responses closely approximated the organizational pattern which existed at the time of the survey. The survey was mailed in November of 1979. Parts II, III, and IV of this monograph present a portion of the results of this survey.

TABLE 2

ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERNS IN NORTH CAROLINA MIDDLE GRADES SCHOOLS — 1978-79

Grades	All Schools		Survey Schools	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
3-7	2	1	2	1
4-7	10	3	4	2
4-8	22	7	12	6
5-7	3	1	3	1
5-8	29	9	16	8
5-9	1	0	1	0
6-7	10	3	8	4
6-8	50	15	40	19
6-9	4	1	3	1
7-8	50	15	28	14
7-9	149	45	90	44
Totals	330	100	207	100

PART II
CURRENT PRACTICES

Reasons for Establishing Middle Grades Schools

Table 3 presents data indicating the reasons for the establishment of the middle grades schools included in the survey. The primary reasons given for the establishment of schools were to provide a better instructional program for the age group, to facilitate overcrowdedness in other buildings, and to accommodate new buildings. More than one response was checked by several of the respondents. The most common response in the "other" category was that of desegregation (6%).

TABLE 3

NUMBER AND PERCENT OF MIDDLE GRADES SCHOOLS INDICATING CERTAIN REASONS FOR ESTABLISHMENT

Reason	Number	Percent
To accommodate a new building	42	14
To facilitate overcrowdedness in another building	56	19
To attempt an innovation	19	6
To provide a better instructional program for the age group	117	39
To remedy weaknesses of a former program	18	6
To aid desegregation	17	6
To aid in reorganization of existing programs i.e., merger, school closings, etc.	23	8
Other	7	2
Total Responses	299	100%

Number of Feeder Schools

The majority of middle grades schools had one to four feeder schools. Fifty-eight schools (28%) had only one feeder school with 119 (57%) having two to four such schools. Thirty schools (14%) reported having five or more feeder schools.

Number of Secondary Schools Attended

Most middle grades schools feed into only one secondary school. One hundred sixty-seven respondents (81%) indicated that students from their schools attended a single high school. Thirty-one (15%) reported that students from their schools attended two different high schools, and nine schools (4%) reported having students that attended three or more such schools

Size of Schools

Table 4 shows the range of enrollments reported by the survey schools. The majority of the schools had an enrollment of between 300 and 700 students with the largest percentage falling into the 500 to 699 category (30%). Only 14 schools (7%) had enrollments of less than 300. Seventy-six percent of the schools contained betwen 300 and 899 students.

TABLE 4

ENROLLMENTS*

Enrollment	Number	Percent
Below 300	14	7
300-499	45	23
500-699	61	30
700-899	46	23
900 +	34	17
Totals	200	100%

*Total responses 200.

Curriculum Opportunities (Required Courses)

Table 5 shows the number and percent of middle grades schools requiring courses by grade level. As would be expected, language arts, social studies, science and math are virtually uniformly required in all grades. Physical education is required in over 90 percent of the schools with the exception of ninth grade. Music and art are required in over 50 percent of the schools below grade eight. Industrial arts, vocational arts, home economics, foreign language, speech and unified arts are required in over one-third of the schools in grades seven and eight. As might be expected, more of these subjects are required at the ninth grade level.

Curriculum Opportunities (Elective Courses)

The number and percent of elective offerings are presented in Table 6. Analysis of the data makes it evident that with the exceptions of unified arts and career education, each elective offering increases as the grade level becomes higher. Vocal and instrumental music, art, industrial arts, home economics and foreign language are among those elective offerings available in large numbers of middle grades schools.

TABLE 6

NUMBER AND PERCENT OF MIDDLE GRADES SCHOOLS OFFERING CERTAIN ELECTIVES BY GRADE LEVEL*

Subject	Grade 5		Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8		Grade 9	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Vocal Music	1	3	27	30	88	43	107	56	77	82
Instrumental Music	8	21	51	57	138	67	131	69	82	87
Art	4	11	22	25	80	39	87	46	94	100
Industrial Arts	0	0	5	6	46	22	64	34	94	100
Home Economics	0	0	6	7	44	21	61	32	83	88
Foreign Language	1	3	7	8	40	19	63	33	70	74
Dramatics	0	0	6	7	19	9	33	17	30	32
Speech	1	3	6	7	18	9	21	11	18	19
Unified Arts	1	3	4	4	15	7	15	8	4	4
Career Education	0	0	8	9	60	29	50	26	30	32
Typing	0	0	4	4	21	10	31	16	48	51

*Number reporting, grade 5, 38; grade 6, 89; grade 7, 207; grade 8, 190; grade 9, 94.

TABLE 5

NUMBER AND PERCENT OF NORTH CAROLINA MIDDLE GRADES SCHOOLS REQUIRING CERTAIN SUBJECTS

	Grade 5				Grade 6				Grade 7				Grade 8				Grade 9			
Subject	All Year	½ Year	Less Than ½	% Reg.	All Year	½ Year	Less Than ½	% Reg.	All Year	½ Year	Less Than ½	% Reg.	All Year	½ Year	Less Than ½	% Reg.	All Year	½ Year	Less Than ½	% Reg.
Language Arts	38	0	0	100	89	0	0	100	205	1	0	99	185	1	0	98	88	0	0	94
Social Studies	38	0	0	100	88	1	0	100	203	3	0	99	182	3	0	97	84	0	0	89
Science	38	0	0	100	88	1	0	100	203	3	0	99	184	2	0	98	69	2	0	76
Mathematics	38	0	0	100	89	0	0	100	205	1	0	99	186	0	0	98	85	2	0	93
Physical Education	35	3	0	100	73	8	2	93	157	40	5	98	139	39	1	94	74	9	1	89
Music	25	2	8	92	47	8	18	82	52	32	55	67	46	23	37	56	11	1	2	15
Art	24	1	10	92	38	3	23	72	33	43	54	63	28	24	40	48	12	2	2	17
Industrial Arts	0	0	1	3	0	1	5	7	3	6	18	13	3	13	13	15	14	4	2	21
Vocational Arts	1	0	0	3	1	1	3	6	10	10	18	18	9	11	17	19	6	5	2	14
Home Economics	0	0	2	5	0	1	4	6	3	7	17	13	4	11	13	15	15	0	2	18
Foreign Language	0	0	1	3	0	0	4	4	4	4	4	6	3	5	7	8	3	0	0	3
Speech	3	0	0	8	0	0	4	4	1	0	7	4	1	1	6	4	1	0	2	3
Unified Arts	0	0	2	5	0	0	4	4	3	1	4	4	1	0	3	2	2	0	0	2
Career Education	1	0	1	5	3	2	9	16	24	23	22	35	19	31	19	36	5	3	0	9

*Number reporting, grade 5, 38; grade 6, 89; grade 7, 207; grade 8, 190; grade 9, 94.

Curriculum Opportunities
(Other Than Required or Elective Offerings)

Student government, student newspapers, and interschool and intramural sports programs were most often listed as curriculum opportunities other than required or elective courses. Student government was a part of the curriculum in 34 percent of fifth grades; 52 percent of sixth grades; 74 percent of seventh grades; 71 percent of eighth grades; and 62 percent of ninth grades. Student newspapers were a part of the program in 42 percent of fifth grades; 31 percent of sixth grades; 45 percent of seventh grades; 60 percent of eighth grades; and 77 percent of ninth grades.

The number and percent of middle grades schools offering interschool and intramural sports by grade level and sex are presented in Table 7. The data revealed that about one-fourth of fifth grade, over one-half of sixth grade, and over 60 percent of seventh and eighth grade boys and girls attend a school where intramural programs are offered at their grade level. However, students in ninth grade were offered such programs in only 56 percent of the schools. The percentages of opportunities for males and females were almost identical.

TABLE 7

NUMBER AND PERCENT OF MIDDLE GRADES SCHOOLS OFFERING INTERSCHOOL AND INTRAMURAL SPORTS BY GRADE LEVEL AND SEX*

	Grade 5		Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8		Grade 9	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Boys Intramurals	9	24	49	55	127	61	116	61	53	56
Girls Intramurals	9	24	48	54	132	64	118	62	53	56
Boys Interschool	2	5	8	8	156	75	159	84	83	88
Girls Interschool	2	5	9	10	153	74	150	79	75	80

*Number reporting, grade 5, 38; grade 6, 89; grade 7, 207; grade 8, 190; grade 9, 94.

The data revealed that interschool sports programs did not exist in large numbers at the fifth and sixth grade levels. However, at the seventh and eighth grade levels, 74 to 84 percent of all schools reported an interschool sports program. At the ninth grade level, over 80 percent of schools reported having interschool sports for boys and girls. Thirty schools (14%) had no interschool sports program.

Instructional Organization

The data concerning instructional organization disclosed that the most popular form of organization is departmentalization (78%). Sixty-five percent of the schools used the block form of organization and 36 percent reported using the self-contained model.

It should be recognized that many schools utilize more than one form of instructional organization. Team teaching was a part of 31 percent of the schools and over one-half (54%) reported having a plan for the individualization of instruction.

TABLE 8

DISTRIBUTION OF TYPES OF INSTRUCTIONAL ORGANIZATION IN MIDDLE GRADES SCHOOLS

Organizational Type	Number	Percent
Self Contained	74	36
Block	135	65
Back-to-back	42	20
Team Teaching	64	31
Interdisciplinary Teaming	20	10
Large Group Instruction	53	26
Small Group Instruction	84	41
Individualized Instruction	112	54
Departmentalization	162	78
Modular Scheduling	9	4
School-within-a-school	20	10
Learning Activity Packages	35	17
Mini-courses	45	22
Independent Study Programs	27	13

Scheduling For Instruction

Table 9 presents the distribution of schools utilizing certain types of scheduling by grade level. The daily period - equal in length - tends to be the predominant pattern at the seventh grade level and above. Teams plan for instruction more often at the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade levels than at the fifth or ninth grade levels. The modular schedule is utilized in only small numbers of middle grades schools.

TABLE 9

DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOOLS UTLIZING CERTAIN TYPES OF SCHEDULING BY GRADE LEVEL

	Grade 5		Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8		Grade 9	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Daily periods - equal	14	37	35	39	45	70	139	73	80	85
Daily periods - varied	16	42	28	31	58	22	35	18	10	11
Modular Schedule	3	8	6	7	11	5	8	4	1	1
Same each day	12	32	27	30	102	49	95	50	60	64
Similar each day	10	26	23	26	37	18	34	18	13	14
Weekly Schedule	14	37	30	34	71	34	64	34	30	32
Change each term	3	8	9	10	45	22	46	24	21	22
Same all year	19	50	40	45	83	40	78	41	39	41
Teaching teams arrange	3	8	17	19	31	15	29	15	7	7

Professional Training of Faculties

The majority of teachers in the survey schools had been trained in secondary education. Three thousand one hundred forty-one teachers (45%) had secondary training, 2,124 (31%) had elementary training, and 1,680 (24%) had middle/junior high school training. It is evident that the large majority of teachers in these middle grades schools had no special training with 76% being prepared to teach at other levels.

Accreditation of Schools

The accreditation status of the middle grades schools of this survey varied significantly. Sixty-nine schools (35%) are accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and forty-five (23%) by the State. Forty schools (20%) are accredited by both agencies. Forty-three schools (22%) indicated that they were not accredited by either agency. A total of 197 schools responded to this question.

Reporting Pupil Progress

The number and percent of middle grades schools using various systems of reporting pupil progress are shown in table 10. A large majority (77%) of schools use a combination of reporting systems. However, twenty-one percent of the schools reported using a letter scale. The combination of systems most often utilized was that of a letter scale complimented by parent-teacher and parent-teacher-pupil conferences.

TABLE 10

NUMBER AND PERCENT OF MIDDLE GRADES SCHOOLS USING VARIOUS SYSTEMS OF REPORTING PUPIL PROGRESS

	Number	Percent
Letter scale	42	21
Number scale	3	2
Percentage scale	0	0
Satisfactory-unsatisfactory	0	0
Parent-teacher conference	1	0
Parent-teacher-pupil conference	0	0
Anecdotal written record	0	0
Combination	155	77
Totals	201	100%

Special Personnel

The number and percent of middle grades schools with certain special personnel are represented in Table 11. Seventy-six percent of schools had one or more assistant principal. The most often reported special personnel, however, were guidance counselors who were found in 89 percent of all schools. Seventy-two percent of middle grades schools have paraprofessionals and 24 percent have resource center coordinators.

TABLE 11

NUMBER AND PERCENT OF MIDDLE GRADES SCHOOLS REPORTING CERTAIN SPECIAL PERSONNEL

Position	Number	Percent
Assistant Principals	158	76
Deans of Boys	2	
Deans of Girls	2	
Department Chairpersons	82	40
Resource Coordinators	0	
Learning Center Coordinators	38	18
Resource Center Coordinators	49	24
Curriculum Coordinators	24	12
Guidance Counselors	184	89
Paraprofessionals	150	72
Other	25	25

Years of Operation

The data in Table 12 represents the number of years the schools in the survey had been in operation as middle grades schools. Over 60 percent of the schools had been established since 1970. Eighty-eight percent of the schools had been established since 1965. It is evident that middle grades education in North Carolina is a relatively new concept that has grown rapidly.

TABLE 12

YEARS OF OPERATION AS A MIDDLE GRADES SCHOOL

Years	Number	Percent
75-79	54	32
70-74	56	34
65-69	36	22
60-64	10	6
55-59	7	4
50-54	3	2
45-49	1	
Totals	167	100%

Age of Buildings

Table 13 represents the ages of the buildings of middle grades schools responding to the survey. Although the schools themselves had not been established for long periods of time, the buildings in which they were housed were relatively old. For example 56 percent of the buildings in this survey were over 21 years old. (When buildings of several different ages were reported, the age of the oldest building was counted as the age of the campus.) However, 21 percent of the buildings had been constructed in the last decade.

TABLE 13

AGE OF MIDDLE GRADES SCHOOLS BUILDINGS

Years	Number	Percent
0-5	35	17
6-10	9	4
11-15	28	14
16-20	19	9
Over 21	116	56
Totals	207	100%

Original Building Design

Table 14 shows the number and percent of middle grades schools reporting certain original building designs. The data reveals that the largest number of middle grades schools were originally designed as junior high schools (37%). Eleven percent of the buildings were originally designed as middle schools. These relatively large percentages (48%) indicate that almost one-half of the buildings were built for middle grades schools. The remaining 52 percent of the buildings were originally designed for other purposes with the largest percentage (29%) being designed for high school use.

TABLE 14

NUMBER AND PERCENT OF MIDDLE GRADES SCHOOLS REPORTING CERTAIN ORIGINAL BUILDING DESIGNS

Type of School	Number	Percent
Middle School	24	11
Junior High School	76	37
Senior High School	60	29
Elementary School	16	8
Other	31	15
Totals	207	100%

PART III
A COMPARISON OF PRACTICES IN MIDDLE AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

This portion of the report will examine selected similarities and differences of middle grades schools with and without grade nine. The term *middle school* will be used to refer to schools serving at least two grades, no more than five grades, and including grade seven but not nine. The term *junior high school* will be used to refer to schools serving at least two grades, no more than five grades, and including grades seven, eight and nine. It is realized that these definitions are organizational in nature, but the comparisons may enable the reader to better determine whether or not including the ninth grade in a middle grades school affects the instructional program to a significant degree.

It is believed by many that the influence of having ninth grade in a middle grades school is negative. They feel that the ninth grade program (i.e. the Carnegie unit, extra-curricular activities, etc.) makes it difficult to provide students below that level with appropriate learning experiences. Others believe just as strongly that ninth graders are better served in the junior high school than in the secondary school. The purpose of this study was not to answer the question of "which is best" but to help determine if real differences exist. A much more detailed study would be needed to determine the superiority of either plan.

Examination of Table 15 will assist the reader in determining which schools were included in the categories of middle and junior high school. Of the 94 schools included in the junior high category, only three used the term *middle* in their title. Therefore, this section of the study is basically a comparison of junior high schools and other schools using other titles and not containing ninth grade. A large number of the "other schools" (76%) used the word *middle* in their title. All but three of the schools included in the junior high school category used the words *junior high* in their title (97%).

Organizational Patterns in North Carolina Middle and Junior High Schools

Analysis of the data represented in Table 15 indicates that almost all middle grades schools with grade nine are organized on a 7-9 plan. Ninety schools (96%) are organized on the 7-9 plan with three being organized on the 6-9 plan (3%) and one (1%) on the 5-9 pattern. The most common pattern in schools without grade nine was the 6-8 plan (35%). Twenty-eight of these middle schools (25%) were organized on a 7-8 plan with the next most popular plan being the 5-8 organization (14%).

TABLE 15

ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERNS IN NORTH CAROLINA MIDDLE AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS — 1979-80*

Grades	Middle Schools		Junior High Schools	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
3-7	2	2	0	0
4-7	4	3	0	0
4-8	12	11	0	0
5-7	3	3	0	0
5-8	16	14	0	0
5-9	0	0	1	1
6-7	8	7	0	0
6-8	40	35	0	0
6-9	0	0	3	3
7-8	28	25	0	0
7-9	0	0	90	96
Totals	113	100	94	100

*This data includes only the 207 schools responding to the survey.

Reasons For Establishment

The reasons given for establishment of middle and junior high schools were almost identical. The most common response was to provide a better instructional program for the age group. Forty percent of middle schools and 38 percent of junior high schools gave this response.

Size of Schools

Middle schools as a group are smaller than junior high schools. Although about one-half of middle and junior high schools range in enrollment from 500 to 899 students, over one-fourth (27%) of junior high schools have over 900 students with only eight percent of middle schools reaching that number. Forty-two percent of middle schools have less than 500 students as compared to only 14 percent of junior high schools.

TABLE 16

ENROLLMENTS IN NORTH CAROLINA MIDDLE AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS*

Enrollment	Middle Schools		Junior High Schools	
	No.	%	No.	%
Below 300	13	12	1	1
300-499	33	30	12	13
500-699	32	29	29	32
700-899	22	20	24	26
900+	9	8	25	27

*Total enrollments, middle schools, 108; junior high schools, 91.

Curriculum Opportunities (Required Courses)

Language arts, social studies, science and mathematics are required in almost all middle and junior high schools through the eighth grade level. However, in junior high schools at the seventh and eighth grade levels, approximately one to six percent of schools do not require these subjects. The number of schools requiring these subjects at the ninth grade level ranged from 73 to 94 percent.

Physical education is required in over 90 percent of middle and junior high schools. Music and art is required in 70 percent of all schools below the eighth grade level. No significant difference in offerings of required subjects such as home economics, industrial arts, foreign language and dramatics was found.

Curriculum Opportunities (Elective Courses)

Table 17 represents the number and percent of elective offerings at middle and junior high schools. Vocal music, art, foreign language, instrumental music, industrial arts and home economics are offered more often at junior high schools and dramatics, speech, unified arts, career education and typing offered more often at middle schools. Careful examination of Table 17 will reveal the patterns at different grade levels. Art and music are offered at all junior high schools. Home economics, foreign language, vocal and instrumental music and typing are offered at over 50 percent of junior high schools at the ninth grade level. Unified arts (4%) and speech (19%) are offered least at the ninth grade level at the junior high schools of this survey.

TABLE 17

PERCENT OF MIDDLE AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS OFFERING CERTAIN ELECTIVES IN GRADES SIX THROUGH EIGHT

Subject	Middle Schools			Junior High Schools		
	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Vocal Music	29	38	43	50	48	70
Instrumental Music	56	67	68	75	66	70
Art	25	33	35	25	46	56
Industrial Arts	5	19	25	25	26	42
Home Economics	7	21	23	0	21	41
Foreign Language	7	15	21	25	24	46
Dramatics	7	12	16	0	5	19
Speech	7	12	11	0	5	11
Unified Arts	4	6	6	0	8	9
Career Education	9	25	25	0	34	28
Typing	4	12	17	0	7	16

Curriculum Opportunities (Other Than Required Or Elective Offerings)

In both middle and junior high schools student government, student newspapers, and interschool and intramural sports were most often listed as curriculum opportunities other than required or elective courses. These opportunities were available in almost the same percentages of middle and junior high schools.

The percent of middle and junior high schools offering intramural and interschool sports by grade level and sex is presented in Table 18. No junior high schools reported having intramural or interschool sports programs at the fifth and sixth grade levels. However, it should be noted that only four junior high schools contained fifth or sixth grade. Approximately seventy percent of middle schools reported having intramural sports programs at the seventh and eighth grade levels as compared to only about one-half of junior high schools. Interschool sports programs were offered in approximately the same ratios in the middle and junior high schools. Interschool sports were reported as a part of the seventh and eighth grade in over three-fourths of the middle grades schools. Twenty-four middle schools (21%) and six junior highs (6%) reported having no interschool sports program.

TABLE 18

PERCENT OF MIDDLE AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS OFFERING INTERSCHOOL AND INTRAMURAL SPORTS

	Middle Schools				Junior High Schools				
	5th	6th	7th	8th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th
Boys Intramurals	24	58	70	74	0	0	51	48	56
Girls Intramurals	24	50	70	74	0	0	56	50	59
Boys Interschool	5	9	78	81	0	0	72	86	88
Girls Interschool	5	10	74	80	0	0	73	87	80

Instructional Organization

Table 19 shows the distribution of types of instructional organization utilized in the middle and junior high schools of this survey. The instructional organization found in middle and junior high schools does appear to differ significantly in some areas. Self-contained classrooms, block scheduling, team teaching, interdisciplinary teaming, large and small group instruction, and mini courses are among practices found more frequently in middle schools. Departmentalization and back-to-back scheduling are more often a part of the instructional organization of the junior high school.

TABLE 19

DISTRIBUTION OF TYPES OF INSTRUCTIONAL ORGANIZATION IN MIDDLE AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS*

Organization Type	Middle Schools		Junior Hi Schls	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Self-contained	50	45	24	26
Block	80	71	55	59
Back-to-back	20	18	22	23
Team Teaching	42	38	22	23
Interdisciplinary Teaming	15	13	5	5
Large Group Instruction	35	31	18	19
Small Group Instruction	50	45	34	36
Individualized Instruction	65	58	47	50
Departmentalization	77	69	85	90
Modular Scheduling	7	6	2	2
School-within-a-school	15	13	5	5
Learning Activity Packages	20	18	15	16
Mini-courses	29	26	16	17
Independent Study Programs	19	17	8	9

*Total responses, middle schools, 112; junior high schools, 94.

Reporting Pupil Progress

The majority of middle and junior high schools use similar methods of reporting pupil progress. A combination of methods is used by both middle and junior high schools. This combination usually includes the letter system and some form of parent-teacher or parent-teacher-student conference. Eighty-one percent of middle schools and 72 percent of junior high schools use some combination of methods to report pupil progress. The letter method is used by 17 percent of middle schools and 26 percent of junior high schools.

Special Personnel

The data in Table 20 presents the number and percent of middle and junior high schools reporting certain special personnel. The junior high schools reported larger percentages of selected personnel. Larger numbers of assistant principals, department chairpersons, learning center coordinators, resource center coordinators, curriculum coordinators, and guidance counselors were available in junior high schools. Middle schools had larger numbers of paraprofessionals.

TABLE 20

NUMBER AND PERCENT OF MIDDLE AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS REPORTING CERTAIN SPECIAL PERSONNEL

Position	Middle Schools		Junior Hi Schls	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Assistant Principals	70	62	88	94
Deans of Boys	1	0	1	1
Deans of Girls	1	0	1	1
Department Chairpersons	35	31	47	50
Resource Coordinators	0	0	0	0
Learning Center Coordinators	16	14	22	23
Resource Center Coordinators	21	19	28	30
Curriculum Coordinators	6	5	18	19
Guidance Counselors	96	85	88	94
Paraprofessionals	94	83	56	60
Other	28	25	24	26

Professional Training Of Teachers

Table 21 represents the type of professional training of teachers in middle and junior high schools. A larger percentage of middle school teachers had elementary training (44%) as compared to junior high school teachers (19%). Fifty-six percent of junior high school teachers had secondary training and 33 percent of middle school teachers had secondary training. Only 23 percent of middle school teachers and 25 percent of junior high school techers had specialized training in the area of middle or junior high school education.

TABLE 21

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF TEACHERS IN MIDDLE AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

Type of Professional Training	Middle Schools		Junior Hi Schls	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Elementary Education	1412	44	712	19
Secondary Education	1078	33	2063	56
Middle/Jr. Hi School Education	750	23	930	25
Totals	3240	100	3705	100

PART IV
CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

A major purpose of this study was to determine the nature of middle grades education in North Carolina. It is hoped that by having increased knowledge available, educators, policy makers and others that influence the education and welfare of middle grades youth can better assess and improve their learning opportunities. This researcher hopes that the conclusions and recommendations of the report will serve as a springboard for efforts to take a closer look at what is, and what could and should be in the education of middle grades learners. Although North Carolina is nationally recognized as a leader in middle grades education, it is evident that improvement is always possible. This section of the monograph will concern selected findings of the study. The reader should refer to earlier sections for more detailed information.

Middle Grades Education in North Carolina

The first part of this section deals with the nature of all middle grades schools responding to the survey (207). The recommendations represent the opinions of the researcher:

1. The number of middle grades schools have more than doubled since 1968. The 7-9 junior high school is the most popular organizational pattern but schools without grade nine - usually called middle schools - are gaining rapidly in popularity. However, there are still many thousands of middle grades students attending schools that are not based on their unique learning needs. Frequently, middle grades learners have been assigned to schools based on administrative convenience.

   It is recommended that students in grades five or six through grade eight be placed in common schools so that programs based on their needs and interests can be developed. It should be recognized that students in these grades represent a developmental age group and have many common characteristics and needs. These schools -regardless of name - should attempt to provide students with a program which allows them to experience a smooth transition between the elementary school and the high school and between childhood and adolescence.

2. The majority of schools responding to the survey have enrollments of between 300 and 700. However, 17 percent of the schools have enrollments of over 900.

   It is recommended that schools with large enrollments be reorganized utilizing the "school-within-a-school" concept to help ensure that they not become too impersonal or fall into the trap of operating as "mini-high schools." It is further recommended that these schools implement carefully planned teacher-based guidance programs.

3. Language arts, social studies, science and mathematics are uniformly required at all levels at virtually all middle grades schools. Physical education is required at over 90 percent of all schools. Other subjects are required at various levels with larger numbers being required at the ninth grade level.

   It is recommended that special emphasis continue to be placed on basic subjects with careful attention placed on the nature of the instruction. Other portions of the survey reveal that these subjects are often taught in ways that allow little individualization of instruction to occur. It is also highly recommended that physical education be required on a daily basis for all students.

4. Elective offerings in middle grades schools most often included vocal and instrumental music, art, industrial arts, home economics, and foreign language. These and other electives are offered more frequently at higher grade levels.

   It is recommended that the elective offerings of middle grades schools be increased and made more available to lower grades students. These exploratory experiences should be carefully planned and based on the interests and needs of the age group. High school type experiences are inappropriate in most instances. Interest courses and interest clubs should be a part of these programs.

5. Student government, student newspapers and interschool and intramural sports programs are most often offered as curriculum opportunities other than required or elective courses in most middle grades schools. Intramural sports programs are available to relatively large numbers of boys and girls in middle grades schools. However, at the ninth grade level these opportunities greatly diminish. Interschool sports programs do not exist at the fifth and sixth grade levels at most schools. These programs do exist for boys and girls at the seventh and eighth grade levels at approximately 80 percent of schools. Thirty percent of the schools reported having no interschool sports program.

   It is recommended that increased numbers of options be offered for middle grades youth to engage in curriculum opportunities other than required and elective courses. Interest clubs and other activities which allow for wide involvement of all students should be adopted. Interschool sports should not exist below the ninth grade level. When these programs do exist, they should be carefully controlled and operate on a limited scale based on what is known about the middle school child. A wealth of evidence has pointed out the physical and emotional damage that may occur when this age group is involved in interschool varsity-type sports events. At the middle grades level physical education and intramurals should be of first priority and available to all students.

6. Departmentalization is the most popular form of instructional organization in North Carolina middle grades schools. The daily period—equal in length—tends to be the predominate pattern at the seventh grade level and above.

   It is recommended that middle grades schools be organized on a flexible basis so that the diverse learning needs of the students may be better provided for. The schedule should allow for the instructional program to be transitional in nature. It should provide many opportunities for teachers to make decisions that reflect the everchanging learning needs of the age group. A rigid schedule makes the level of individualization needed by these students difficult if not impossible to attain.

7. A large percentage of schools in this survey report pupil progress with a combination of the use of a letter scale and some form of parent-teacher or parent-teacher-student conference.

   It is recommended that parent-teacher and parent-teacher-student conferences continue to be utilized whenever possible. It is further recommended that forms of reporting pupil progress be expanded from the limited practice of assigning letter grades to forms of reporting which give parents more complete information concerning the true progress of students.

8. Guidance counselors and assistant principals are the special personnel most often found in middle grades schools. Special personnel such as curriculum coordinators and learning center coordinators are employed in only small numbers of schools.

   It is recommended that guidance counselors should be present in greater numbers in all middle grades schools regardless of the size of the schools. All schools should have assistant principals and other special personnel in sufficient numbers so that quality programs can exist.

9. Large percentages of teachers in middle grades schools have had no special training in middle/junior high school education. The majority of teachers in this survey had either elementary or secondary training. Only 24 percent of teachers had any special training in middle/junior high school education.

   It is strongly recommended that teacher training institutions immediately increase efforts to provide the specialized training needed to prepare teachers and administrators for careers in middle/junior high school education. Concentrated efforts must also be made to offer quality in-service programs for the thousands of teachers already teaching in middle grades schools. Local educational districts and accreditation agencies must increase efforts to ensure that teachers in middle grades schools have proper certification and training. The State Department of Public Instruction must also continue to be supportive of attempts to improve the certification practices and training of middle grades educators.

10. Forty percent of the middle grades schools in this survey reported that they were not accredited by the state or by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

    It is recommended that all middle grades schools become accredited by either the state or the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The programs available for middle grades students must be of the highest quality.

As previously stated, this list of conclusions and recommendations deals only with selected findings of the study. The reader is urged to carefully study the report so that more accurate insights can be gained.

Middle and Junior High Schools: A Comparison

Part III of the monograph examined the question "Are there any real differences in middle and junior high schools in North Carolina?" There do appear to be some significant differences in the two types of schools (see Part III for definitions, etc.). The list below does not deal with all areas but is representative of differences found. The reader will find by examining Part III that the middle and junior high schools also have many similarities, however, some of the differences found were:

1. Most junior high schools include grades seven, eight and nine while most middle schools include other combinations and seldom grade nine.
2. Middle schools as a group were smaller than junior high schools.
3. Language arts, social studies, science and mathematics are required at a slightly larger number of middle schools than junior high schools. Other subjects at middle and junior high schools are similar in type.
4. Vocal music, art, foreign language, instrumental music, industrial arts and home economics are offered more at junior high schools while dramatics, speech, unified arts, career education and typing are offered more frequently at middle schools.
5. Student government and student newspapers are offered at about the same percentage of middle and junior high schools. However, more middle schools than junior high schools have intramural sports programs at the seventh and eighth grade levels. Interschool sports programs exist in approximately the same ratios in middle and junior high schools, but a somewhat larger percentage of junior high schools have interschool sports programs than do middle schools.
6. Self-contained classrooms, block scheduling, team teaching, interdisciplinary teaming, large and small group instruction and mini-courses are found more often in middle schools than in junior high schools. Departmentalization and back-to-back scheduling are more often present in junior high schools.
7. Junior high schools have larger percentages of most special personnel such as assistant principals and guidance counselors.
8. Larger percentages of elementary trained teachers are found in middle schools and larger percentages of secondary trained teachers are found in junior high schools. About one-fourth of the teachers in middle and junior high schools have had some degree of special training for teaching at the middle grades level.

It is hoped by the researcher that the information contained in this study will aid those seeking to improve the educational opportunities of middle grades learners. It is fully recognized that it is not the name on a building that determines the quality of the instructional program but the program itself. For too many years, too little attention has been given to the education of middle grades students. It is time for all those concerned and responsible for the education and welfare of this age group to band together and put forth a determined and unified effort toward improvement. There is no time to spare with the education and welfare of many thousands of youths at stake.